Tirax language

Tirax (**Dirak**, **Mae**) is an Oceanic language spoken in north east Malakula, Vanuatu.

Tirax	
Mae, Dirak	
Native to	Vanuatu
Region	Malekula
Native speakers	1,000 (2001)[1]
Language family	Austronesian ▪ Malayo-Polynesian ▪ Oceanic ▪ Southern Oceanic ▪ Central Vanuatu ▪ Malakula ▪ Western ▪ **Tirax**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	mme
Glottolog	maee1241 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/maee1241)[2]

Contents

Tirax homeland
Alternative names
Typology
Apicolabials
Narrative structure
References
External links

Tirax homeland

The name *Tirax* refers to ‘inland person’. The original homeland of the Tirax speakers is the mountainous interior of North Central Malakula, neighbouring Big Nambas. As the Tirax speakers embraced Christianity in the early twentieth century, they began to migrate towards the east coast, where they founded the villages of Mae, Rori and Bethel.[3]

Alternative names

Tirax speakers often refer to their own language as *resan*, "language, speech", or *Resan Tirax*. *Tirax* is called “Dirak” by the speakers of Northeast Malakula.[4] *Dirak* is the name used to refer to Tirax in John Lynch and Terry Crowley’s 2001, *Languages of Vanuatu: A New Survey and Bibliography.* Because it is the language of Mae village, the Tirax language is referred to as "Mae" in the Ethnologue listing, and also in Darrell Tryon's 1976, *New Hebrides languages: An internal classification.* See Mae language. Tirax speakers prefer not to use "Mae" as the language name, as it is also the language of Rori and Bethel.[5]

Typology

Tirax has many features in common with other North Vanuatu languages. It has no tense marking, but has "obligatory subject-mood markers distinguishing realis and irrealis mood". It has "inalienable and alienable possessive marking", with a range of "possessive classifiers for alienable possession" including specific markers for food, drink and paths. Also like other Malakula languages, numbers have verbal morphology. Tirax has "nuclear verb serialisation, and a range of strategies for paratactic linkage. Several morphosyntactic processes, such as object marking and plural marking, are sensitive to the animacy of the referent".[6]

Apicolabials

There is evidence that Tirax had an apicolabial (linguolabial consonant) series, likely borrowed from Big Nambas. The apicolabials are no longer part of the Tirax phoneme system, but have recently shifted to their dental consonant counterparts.[7]

Mae village

Narrative structure

Until 2004, Tirax was an oral language; a writing system is a relatively recent development. Tirax narratives show previously undescribed structural features not found in written narratives. There is a linking device between paragraphs, termed "transition clauses". Transition clauses are associated with a misalignment of prosodic and discourse-semantic levels of structure.[8] And there are a small set of circumstances in which story events are related out of chronological order, which runs counter to traditional theories of narrative.[9]

References

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3. Brotchie, A. (2009). Tirax grammar and narrative: an Oceanic language spoken on Malakula, North Central Vanuatu. PhD thesis, Dept. of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, The University of Melbourne. p1
4. Crowley, Terry. 2006b. *Tape: A declining language of Malakula (Vanuatu).* Canberra: Pacific Linguistics. p3 footnote.
5. Brotchie, A. (2009). Tirax grammar and narrative: an Oceanic language spoken on Malakula, North Central Vanuatu. PhD thesis, Dept. of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, The University of Melbourne. p2.
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7. Lynch, J. and Brotchie, A. (2010). Vowel Loss in Tirax and the History of the Apicolabial Shift. Oceanic Linguistics Vol. 49, No. 2 (DECEMBER 2010), pp. 369-388
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9. Brotchie, A. (2016). "Sequentiality in the narratives of Tirax, an oceanic language spoken on Malakula, Vanuatu." In "Narrative in 'societies of intimates". Special issue of *Narrative Inquiry 26:2* (2016) edited by Stirling, L., Green, J., Strahan, T. & Douglas, S. John Benjamins Publishing Company. pp340-375 https://benjamins.com/#catalog/journals/ni.26.2.07bro/details

External links

- Paradisec has a number of collections with Mae materials (http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/search?language_code=mme), including Amanda Brotchie's collection (TB1 (http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/AB1))

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